

March 30, 2004

**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN
NURSING AND FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NURSING PROGRAMS**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines policy regarding the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Awards Program for Excellence in Nursing, consisting of three major areas: Excellence in Nursing, Advancement of Nursing Programs by a Medical Center Director, and Advancement of Nursing Programs by a Medical Center Nurse Executive.

2. BACKGROUND: The Awards Program for Excellence in Nursing was established in 1984. The award categories for Medical Center Directors and Medical Center Nurse Executives were added in 1993 and 2003 respectively.

a. **Excellence in Nursing Award.** The Excellence in Nursing Award annually honors four individuals: two Registered Nurses, one in a staff nurse role and one in an expanded nurse role, (e.g., advanced practice nurse, nurse manager, instructor, etc.); a Licensed Practical Nurse or Licensed Vocational Nurse; and a Nursing Assistant. Awardees must be actively engaged in the care of patients at a VA facility. The recipients' contributions to the care of patients in any VA health care setting are patient-centered and demonstrate such excellence as to merit recognition from peers. ***NOTE:** An individual may receive each award only once.*

b. **Advancement of Nursing Programs by a Medical Center Director Award.** The attitudes and values of a Medical Center Director significantly influence the environment and relationships among health care professionals involved in ensuring quality patient care. Each year this award recognizes one VHA Medical Center Director who has achieved distinction in promoting the VA nursing program, thereby enhancing VA's quality patient care. ***NOTE:** A Director may receive this award only once.*

c. **Advancement of Nursing Programs by a Medical Center Nurse Executive Award.** The skills, attitudes and values of a Medical Center Nurse Executive significantly influence the environment and relationships among health care professionals involved in ensuring quality patient care. Each year this award recognizes one VHA Medical Center Nurse Executive who has achieved distinction in promoting the VA nursing program, thereby enhancing VA's quality patient care. ***NOTE:** A Nurse Executive may receive this award only once.*

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award for Excellence in Nursing, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award to a Medical Center Director for the Advancement of Nursing Programs, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award to a Medical Center Nurse Executive for the Advancement of Nursing Programs, be awarded annually.

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES MARCH 31, 2009

VHA DIRECTIVE 2004-011

March 30, 2004

4. ACTION

a. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring that the criteria, nomination procedures, and selection procedures for these awards are distributed to all VISN Medical Center Directors and Nurse Executives. The awards are the:

(1) Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award for Excellence in Nursing (see Att. A),

(2) Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award to a Medical Center Director for the Advancement of Nursing Programs (see Att. B), and

(3) Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Award to a Medical Center Nurse Executive for the Advancement of Nursing Programs (see Att. C).

b. **Office of Nursing Services (108), VHA Central Office.** Office of Nursing Services (108), VHA Central Office, is responsible for ensuring that:

(1) Appropriate announcements regarding the selection process are distributed annually; and

(2) A presentation of a plaque is made to each award recipient at an annual ceremony held at VHA Central Office, Washington, DC, during National Nurses' Week.

5. REFERENCES: None.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services (108), VA Central Office, Washington, DC, is responsible for the content of this Directive. For questions, call 202-273-9237.

7. RESCISSION: VHA Directives 99-001, 99-002, and 2003-015 are rescinded. This VHA Directive expires March 31, 2009.

S/ Art Hamerschlag for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

Attachments

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 3/31/2004
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mailed 3/31/2004

ATTACHMENT A

SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN NURSING

1. Eligibility. Two Registered Nurses (one staff nurse and one nurse with an expanded role) (RNs); one Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN); and one Nursing Assistant (NA), must be actively engaged in the care of patients at a Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) facility.

2. Criteria

a. **The RNs.** Each of the RNs as a recipient must have demonstrated excellence in at least four of the following seven criteria:

- (1) Demonstrates expert competency in nursing practice.
- (2) Establishes and maintains an individual development plan to support professional career development with demonstrated innovative outcomes in nursing practice.
- (3) Collaborates effectively with other health care colleagues.
- (4) Demonstrates effective use of evidence-based practice to enhance or improve health care outcomes.
- (5) Demonstrates integrity and adherence to the nursing profession's code of ethics.
- (6) Develops and implements strategies to improve organizational performance related to resource utilization.
- (7) Promotes the image of nursing and the nursing profession within the community.

b. **The LPN or LVN, and NA.** The LPN or LVN, and NA must demonstrate excellence in at least three of the following elements:

- (1) Demonstrates effectiveness in improving and delivering patient care to veterans.
- (2) Works with the RN and health care team to provide outstanding care to the veteran patient.
- (3) Improves job-related skills through an individual development plan with demonstrated performance improvement.
- (4) Achieves recognition from co-workers for excellence in the provision of care.

March 30, 2004

3. Nomination Procedures

a. Any VA employee may nominate a local VA nursing employee by a written memo of nomination. For the nomination of an RN, at least four of the seven elements (see subpar. 2a of this Attachment A) must be addressed. For the nomination of a LPN, LVN, or NA, at least three of the four criteria must be addressed. The narrative should be limited to three single-spaced typed pages, and each element being addressed should be stated as the header for each section.

b. Nominations are to be forwarded to the facility's or health care system's ad hoc Nursing Awards Committee, appointed by the Nurse Executive. **NOTE:** *The committee is to consist of a minimum of three staff, none of whom are current nominees.*

c. The Nursing Awards Committee, with the Nurse Executive's concurrence, recommends the best qualified nominees in each category to the facility or health care system Director. **NOTE:** *Recipients will be recognized locally during the annual nursing recognition celebration.*

d. Abbreviations are not to be used, and acronyms must be defined the first time they are used; e.g., Chief Nursing Service (CNS), Associate Director for Patient Care Service (AD for PCS).

e. Nominations are to be forwarded through the facility Nurse Executive (118); endorsed by the VISN Director; and forwarded to the Chief, Nursing Officer (108), VHA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, by February 15th of each year.

f. Each facility or health care system forwards nominees to its Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN). The Nurse Executive from each VISN recommends the top nominee for each category. The VISN nominees are forwarded to the Network Director for concurrence. By February 15, each year the VISN nominations must be forwarded to the Chief Nursing Officer (108), Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20420.

4. Selection

(1) An ad hoc committee, comprised of a Program Director from the Office of Nursing Services (108), and two to three medical center Nurse Executives, is established annually by the Chief, Nursing Officer. This committee is responsible for:

(a) Reviewing all nominations received and making final recommendations, through the Chief Nursing Officer and the Under Secretary for Health, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(b) Recommending, at its discretion, appropriate recognition for finalists who were not chosen as recipients of these awards.

ATTACHMENT B

**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' AWARD TO A MEDICAL CENTER
DIRECTOR FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NURSING PROGRAMS**

1. Eligibility. Any Medical Center Director who has served a minimum of 2 years in the current assignment is eligible.

2. Criteria. Nominees must have demonstrated contemporary and progressive leadership in the advancement of nursing programs, as measured against four of the five elements:

a. Demonstrates support by facilitating the incorporation of contemporary nursing practices into the facility's existing nursing program.

b. Creates an organizational climate ensuring the involvement of Nursing as a clinical practice discipline in the health care facility.

c. Identifies and facilitates maximum support services to enhance the effective functioning of nursing personnel. ***NOTE:** This could include human resources and/or advanced technological equipment.*

d. Demonstrates, through managerial and supervisory efforts, a commitment to support the full professional role of nurses and to foster career growth and development programs for nursing staff.

e. Achieves recognition beyond the medical center for the advancement of nursing.

3. Nomination Procedures

a. Nominations may be made by an individual RN, or a group of RNs, employed in the facility where the Medical Center Director is employed.

b. Narrative statements responding to the applicable criteria must be specific in describing the nominee's accomplishments.

c. Nominations should be limited to three single spaced typed pages; and each element being addressed should be stated as the header for each section.

d. Abbreviations are not to be used; acronyms must be defined the first time they are used, e.g., Chief, Nursing Service (CNS), and the Associate Director for Patient Care Services (AD for PCS).

VHA DIRECTIVE 2004-011

March 30, 2004

e. Nominations are to be forwarded through the facility Nurse Executive (118); endorsed by the VISN Director; and forwarded to the Chief, Nursing Officer (108), VHA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, by February 15th of each year.

4. Selection. An ad hoc committee, comprised of a VHA representative from the Office of Nursing Services (108), a facility Director (usually the previous year's recipient), a Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, or designee, must be established annually by the Chief, Nursing Officer (108). This committee is responsible for:

a. Reviewing all nominations received and making a final recommendation, through the Chief, Nursing Officer (108) and the Under Secretary for Health, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

b. Recommending, at its discretion, appropriate recognition for finalists who were not chosen as the recipient of this award.

ATTACHMENT C

THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' AWARD TO A MEDICAL CENTER NURSE EXECUTIVE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NURSING PROGRAMS,

1. **Eligibility.** Any Medical Center Nurse Executive who has served a minimum of 2 years in the current or present assignment is eligible.
2. **Criteria.** Nominees must have demonstrated contemporary and progressive leadership in the advancement of nursing practice, as measured against at least five of the following six elements:
 - a. Creates and/or directs the integration of nursing or nursing-related activities in the mutual development and achievement of organizational goals.
 - b. Provides leadership in the establishment or improvement of programs designed for the delivery of safe patient care. *NOTE: Excellence is reflected in improved client outcomes and organizational performance.*
 - c. Facilitates and/or establishes and maintains innovative recruitment and retention strategies resulting in significant improvement of staff satisfaction.
 - d. Promotes and actively participates in career development and/or succession planning activities including mentoring, coaching, and facilitating the utilization of educational resources (i.e., the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Learning Opportunities Program, National Nursing Education Initiative, Employee Incentive Scholarship Program, etc.).
 - e. Facilitates creative academic partnerships that promote a learning organization enabling career development, staff retention, etc. *NOTE: This includes cooperative educational and/or research initiatives, internships, etc.*
 - f. Achieves recognition beyond the medical center for the advancement of nursing practice.

3. **Nomination Procedure**

- a. Nominations may be made by the facility senior management, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) staff, or by an individual RN or a group of nurses employed in the facility where the Medical Center Nurse Executive is employed.
- b. Narrative statements responding to the applicable criteria must be specific in describing the nominee's accomplishments.
- c. The narrative should be limited to three single spaced typed pages, and the elements being addressed should be stated as the header for each section.

VHA DIRECTIVE 2004-011

March 30, 2004

d. Abbreviations are not to be used and acronyms must be defined the first time they are used, e.g., Chief, Nursing Service (CNS), Associate Director for Patient Care Services (AD for PCS).

e. Nominations are forwarded through the facility Director, endorsed by the respective VISN Director, and forwarded to the Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services (108), VHA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20420, by February 15th of each year.

4. Selection. An ad hoc committee, comprised of a Program Director from the Office of Nursing Services (108), a facility Director, a Nurse Executive (usually the previous year's recipient) and a Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, or designee, will be established annually by the Office of Nursing Services. This committee is responsible for:

a. Reviewing all nominations received and making a final recommendation, through the Chief Nursing Office and the Under Secretary for Health, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

b. Recommending, at its discretion, appropriate recognition for finalists who were not chosen as the recipient of this award.